



January 9, 2004

Cranston man is sentenced for identity theft crimes

**In a "company card" ruse, Thomas Bengaff
used a victim's personal information to obtain credit cards**

A federal judge today sentenced **Thomas A. Bengaff**, 40, of Cranston, to five years probation, six months of that to be served in home confinement, for credit card fraud that Bengaff committed through identity theft. Bengaff hired a man as a personal security guard, promised him a "company" credit card for incidental expenses, and then used the victim's personal information to obtain cards for himself. Bengaff fraudulently charged \$55,167 against four fraudulently obtained cards.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the sentence, which U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith imposed today in U.S. District Court, Providence. Judge Smith also ordered Bengaff to pay \$61,631.97 in restitution, most of it to credit card companies. As a condition of probation, Bengaff is barred from any type of gambling.

In October, Bengaff, of 67 Mapleton Avenue, pleaded guilty to four counts of fraudulent use of access devices, i.e., credit cards. At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard W. Rose said that, in November 2001, Bengaff approached a waiter at a restaurant in Warwick and offered him a job as a personal security guard. Bengaff told the victim that he was a gambler and that the victim would accompany him on his gambling excursions.

Bengaff had the victim fill out an employment application that included personal identification information. Bengaff then applied for a credit card in the victim's name and

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obtained a secondary card for himself. He gave the primary card to the victim, telling him it was a “company” card to be used for incidental expenses on their travels. Bengaff subsequently obtained three more credit cards in the same manner. In three months, Bengaff fraudulently charged more than \$55,000 against the four cards, which were billed to a post office box in Cranston.

The victim accompanied Bengaff on trips to Las Vegas, Foxwoods, Atlantic City, New York, and Newport. The victim subsequently experienced difficulties with the credit card companies and credit reporting agencies.

The United States Secret Service investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Rose prosecuted it.

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